

A celebratory and defiant take on the history of London's queer spaces

Queer Spaces: London, 1980s – Today

2 April 2019 – 25 August 2019

Galleries 4, Free Entry

#queerspaces

5 February 2019 - This exhibition casts a celebratory and defiant eye over the history of London's queer spaces. Combining rarely-seen archival material with original work by artists concerned with the vibrancy and importance of LGBTQ+ cultural life, this exhibition considers how market-led redevelopment of spaces around London is rapidly transforming the capital's queer scenes. In the decade between 2006 and 2016, more than half of venues for the LGBTQ+ community in London have closed, falling from 125 to 53. In 2017/2018 this figure stabilised, but what has been the effect of these changes on the lives of queer people?

Queer Spaces: London, 1980s – Today features artworks from **Tom Burr** (b. 1963, US), **Prem Sahib** (b. 1982, UK), **Ralph Dunn** (b. 1989, UK); **Evan Ifekoya** (b. 1988, Nigeria) and **Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings** (both b. 1991, UK). Alongside, archive material collated by **University College London (UCL)'s Urban Laboratory** is presented, honouring the rich histories of iconic LGBTQ+ venues in the capital, including some of the most valued but now closed spaces such as the *London Lesbian and Gay Centre*, Clerkenwell, and *First Out Cafe*. The exhibition asks what defines a 'queer space' and the relationship of these venues to the LGBTQ+ community.

Amy Lamé, London's Night Czar, said: *'I am delighted this exhibition is shining a light on the huge role London's LGBT+ venues have played, and continue to play, in the capital's diversity. For decades, London's LGBT+ venues have provided a safe space to unite and socialise and are at the very heart of our city's varied night life. London is open to all, and that's why we are working hard to support LGBT+ venues and why I'm so pleased that after a decade of decline we have seen numbers stabilise.'*

Featuring rarely-displayed archival material from pivotal LGBTQ+ venues, the exhibition shares groundbreaking findings from a London-wide study carried out by UCL's Urban Laboratory. It brings to the fore a selection of case study of individual spaces, each with unique stories. This list includes *The Black Cap* – whose closure in 2015 was met with outcry and protest, spurring the creation of grassroots campaign group the **Black Cap Foundation**. Following a similar campaign, the *Royal Vauxhall Tavern* was recently granted a 20-year lease deal, securing the near future of the venue.

Queer spaces in London and beyond provide a vital place for LGBTQ+ people to find community, socialise, and explore identities outside the mainstream. The exhibition features work by artists asking questions about the meaning and significance of queer spaces, past, present and future. From American artist Tom Burr, whose work on queer spaces and city architecture has been hugely influential, to artist duo Hannah Quinlan & Rosie Hastings, who address contemporary queer community-formation with their work *The Scarcity of Liberty #2* made up of

Press Release

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different objects, leaflets and memorabilia gathered during visits to 170 gay bars across the UK.

Interdisciplinary artist Evan Ifekoya uses sound, collage and poetry to explore gender, blackness and queer nightlife culture, while Ralph Dunn's photographic series *Public Toilets* pays homage to historic gay cruising grounds in romantic portraits of public architecture. In sculptor and installation artist Prem Sahib's work, reflections on body modification, sexual expression and modernity are present through reworkings of furnishings and interior features salvaged from the demolition of iconic gay sauna *Chariots*, whose flagship Shoreditch branch closed in 2016.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a public programme featuring film, conversations and performance. A club night will be hosted in parallel with the exhibition in collaboration with **Miranda at Ace Hotel London**, who have made discounted rooms available for Whitechapel Gallery audiences.

Queer Spaces: London, 1980s – Today offers a powerful treatise on the radical inventiveness, creativity and unpretentiousness inherent within London's queer spaces.

Notes to Editors

- The exhibition is curated by Nayia Yiakoumaki, Curator: Archive Gallery and Vassilios Doupas, independent writer and curator, with Cameron Foote, Assistant Curator at the Whitechapel Gallery.
- Archive section presents case studies from research led by Professor Ben Campkin, The Bartlett School of Architecture and UCL Urban Laboratory, with research assistance from Lo Marshall and Christopher Storey This includes: The Black Cap, Camden Town (1965–2015); First Out, Soho, (1986–2011); The Joiner’s Arms, Hackney (1997–2015); London Lesbian and Gay Centre, Clerkenwell (1983–1990s); and others. The exhibition also features materials about venues in Hackney gathered by Sebastian Buser.
- The report produced by UCL’s Urban Lab, *LGBTQ+ Cultural Infrastructure in London: Night Venues, 2006–present*, by Ben Campkin and Laura Marshall (July 2017) can be found [here](#).
- Exhibition supported by Ace Hotel London.
- The Whitechapel Gallery Archive Exhibitions are generously supported by Catherine Petitgas.
- With additional support from the Queer Spaces Exhibition Circle.

About Whitechapel Gallery

For over a century the Whitechapel Gallery has premiered world class artists from modern masters such as Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and Frida Kahlo to contemporaries such as Sophie Calle, Lucian Freud, Gilbert & George and Mark Wallinger. With beautiful galleries, exhibitions, artist commissions, collection displays, historic archives, education resources, inspiring art courses, dining room and bookshop, the Gallery is open all year round, so there is always something free to see. It is a touchstone for contemporary art internationally, plays a central role in London’s cultural landscape and is pivotal to the continued growth of the world’s most vibrant contemporary art quarter.

About Ace Hotel London

Ace Hotel London Shoreditch is a gathering place in one of the most vibrant neighborhoods in the city. Designed as a tribute to the frenetic and varied histories of Shoreditch, the hotel features a variety of on-site treasures. With an array of cultural programming and a community of local businesses congregating under one roof, Ace Hotel has translated its ethos into a London vernacular in Shoreditch, home of the world famous open-air markets on Brick Lane and Columbia Road and a canvas for artists the world over. The neighborhood’s legacy includes theatres running banned 16th century plays, the debut of drag pioneer Hetty King and the first rumbles of industrialized craft in the Western Hemisphere. Today, it’s a place where art, design, culinary innovation, culture and tech gather and phosphoresce from the heat of collaboration, inspiration and a soft spot for the future come together.

Visitor Information

Admission: Free

Opening times: Tuesday – Sunday, 11am – 6pm; Thursdays, 11am – 9pm

Whitechapel Gallery, 77 – 82 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7QX

Nearest London Underground Stations: Aldgate East, Liverpool Street, Tower Gateway DLR

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